# BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images may include (but are not limited to):

- BLACK BORDERS
- TEXT CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES
- FADED TEXT
- ILLEGIBLE TEXT
- SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES
- COLORED PHOTOS
- BLACK OR VERY BLACK AND WHITE DARK PHOTOS
- GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS

## IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

**As rescanning documents *will not* correct images, please do not report the images to the Image Problem Mailbox.**

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

# PCT



## INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

3

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

| Applicant's or agent's file reference | FOR FURTHER ACTION | See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416) |
|---|---|---|
| 27830/3170 | | |
| International application No. | International filing date *(day/month/year)* | Priority date *(day/month/year)* |
| PCT/US00/18821 | 07/07/2000 | 07/07/1999 |
| International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC<br>B60N2/36 | | |
| Applicant<br>JOHNSON CONTROLS INTERIORS TECHNOLOGY CORP. | | |

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 5 sheets, including this cover sheet.

   ☒ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

   These annexes consist of a total of 8 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

   - I ☒ Basis of the report
   - II ☐ Priority
   - III ☐ Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
   - IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
   - V ☒ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations suporting such statement
   - VI ☐ Certain documents cited
   - VII ☒ Certain defects in the international application
   - VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

| Date of submission of the demand | Date of completion of this report |
|---|---|
| 11/01/2001 | 09.11.2001 |
| Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:<br>European Patent Office<br>D-80298 Munich<br>Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d<br>Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465 | Authorized officer<br>Stelzer, W<br>Telephone No. +49 89 2399 8872 |

Form PCT/IPEA/409 (cover sheet) (January 1994)

# INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No. PCT/US00/18821

## I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application *(Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17))*:
**Description, pages:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3-5 | as originally filed | | | |
| 1,2,6 | as received on | 05/10/2001 | with letter of | 03/10/2001 |

**Claims, No.:**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-21 | as received on | 05/10/2001 | with letter of | 03/10/2001 |

**Drawings, sheets:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1/8-8/8 | as originally filed |

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

   These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

   - ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
   - ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
   - ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

   - ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
   - ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
   - ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
   - ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
   - ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
   - ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☐ the description, pages:
- ☐ the claims, Nos.:
- ☐ the drawings, sheets:

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

   *(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)*

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

**V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

1. Statement

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Novelty (N) | Yes: | Claims | 1-21 |
| | No: | Claims | |
| Inventive step (IS) | Yes: | Claims | 1-21 |
| | No: | Claims | |
| Industrial applicability (IA) | Yes: | Claims | 1-21 |
| | No: | Claims | |

2. Citations and explanations
   **see separate sheet**

**VII. Certain defects in the international application**

The following defects in the form or contents of the international application have been noted:
**see separate sheet**

**Re Item V**

**Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

Prior art document FR-A-2 572 340 is regarded as the most relevant prior art. This document discloses a seating assembly ("Agencement de sièges dans l'habitacle d'un véhicule automobile") with the subject-matters of the first part of independent claim 1, a rear seat assembly with the subject-matters of the first part of independent claim 9 and a front seat assembly with the subject-matters of the first part of independent claim 16, especially with the rear seats movable on tracks between use positions and storage positions.

The problem to be solved by the invention is a further improvement of the prior art seating assembly, especially with regard to avoid to tend to limit the available cargo space due to the raised track portion.

This problem is solved by the subject-matters of the second part of the independent claims 1, 9, and 16, especially by the combination of a pivotal and a translational movement of the rear seat from the use position to the storage positions.

Unity: The invention meets the requirement of unity because the subject-matters of the independent claims are linked as to form a single general inventive concept (Rule 13.1 PCT).

Novelty of the Invention: The subject-matter of the invention shall be considered to be new because no cited prior art document discloses all features of independent claims 1, 9, or 16 in combination.

Inventive Step: The present invention shall be considered as involving an inventive step because, having regard to the state of the art, it is not obvious to a person skilled in the art. There is no reason for a skilled man to combine all the subject-matters defining the invention according to independent claims 1, 9, or 16.

Industrial Application of the Invention: The invention must be considered as susceptible of industrial application because it can be made or used in the vehicle industry.

Claims 2 - 8 depending on claim 1, claims 10 - 15 depending on claim 9 and claims 17 - 21 depending on claim 16 refer to particular embodiments of the object of the independent claims and as such also meet the requirements of Articles 33 (2) and (3) PCT.

**Re Item VII**

**Certain defects in the international application**

To meet the requirements of Rule 5.1 (a) (i) PCT the technical field should have been expressed in terms of the preamble of any independent claim.

To meet the requirements of Rule 5.1 (a) (ii) PCT the document FR-A-2 572 340 should have been cited as to represent the closest prior art according to the preambles of the independent claims.

PA NT COOPERATION TREAT )

# PCT

## NOTIFICATION OF THE RECORDING OF A CHANGE

(PCT Rule 92bis.1 and Administrative Instructions, Section 422)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

COOPER, John, C., III
Foley & Lardner
Firstar Center
777 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202-5367
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

**Date of mailing** (day/month/year)
09 March 2001 (09.03.01)

**Applicant's or agent's file reference**
27830/3170

**IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION**

**International application No.**
PCT/US00/18821

**International filing date** (day/month/year)
07 July 2000 (07.07.00)

1. The following indications appeared on record concerning:

[ ] the applicant [ ] the inventor [X] the agent [ ] the common representative

Name and Address
COX, Jeffrey, M.
Harness, Dickey & Pierce, P.L.C.
P.O. Box 828
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303
United States of America

State of Nationality:
State of Residence:
Telephone No.: 734 662 8000
Facsimile No.: 734 662 7813
Teleprinter No.:

2. The International Bureau hereby notifies the applicant that the following change has been recorded concerning:

[X] the person [X] the name [X] the address [ ] the nationality [ ] the residence

Name and Address
COOPER, John, C., III
Foley & Lardner
Firstar Center
777 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202-5367
United States of America

State of Nationality:
State of Residence:
Telephone No.: (414) 271-2400
Facsimile No.: (414) 297-4900
Teleprinter No.:

3. Further observations, if necessary:
**Please also note the new agent's file reference.**

4. A copy of this notification has been sent to:

[X] the receiving Office
[ ] the International Searching Authority
[X] the International Preliminary Examining Authority
[ ] the designated Offices concerned
[X] the elected Offices concerned
[X] other: COX, Jeffrey, M.

**The International Bureau of WIPO**
**34, chemin des Colombettes**
**1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland**

Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer
F. Baechler

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

P[redacted]ENT COOPERATION TREATY

# PCT

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

| Applicant's or agent's file reference | **FOR FURTHER ACTION** see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below. | |
|---|---|---|
| 1056R12262PO | | |
| International application No. | International filing date *(day/month/year)* | (Earliest) Priority Date *(day/month/year)* |
| PCT/US 00/ 18821 | 07/07/2000 | 07/07/1999 |
| Applicant | | |
| JOHNSON CONTROLS INTERIORS TECHNOLOGY CORP. | | |

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of 3 sheets.

[X] It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. **Basis of the report**

   a. With regard to the **language**, the international search was carried out on the basis of the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated.under this item.

   [ ] the international search was carried out on the basis of a translation of the international application furnished to this Authority (Rule 23.1(b)).

   b. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing :

   [ ] contained in the international application in written form.

   [ ] filed together with the international application in computer readable form.

   [ ] furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.

   [ ] furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readble form.

   [ ] the statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.

   [ ] the statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished

2. [ ] **Certain claims were found unsearchable** (See Box I).

3. [ ] **Unity of invention is lacking** (see Box II).

4. With regard to the **title,**

   [X] the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

   [ ] the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

5. With regard to the **abstract,**

   [X] the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

   [ ] the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the **drawings** to be published with the abstract is Figure No. 3A-3d

   [ ] as suggested by the applicant.

   [X] because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.

   [ ] because this figure better characterizes the invention.

   [ ] None of the figures.

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/US 00/18821

**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER**
IPC 7 B60N2/36

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

**B. FIELDS SEARCHED**

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 B60N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)
EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

**C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

| Category ° | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| X | FR 2 572 340 A (RENAULT)<br>2 May 1986 (1986-05-02) | 1,8-12,<br>18,20,<br>21,<br>26-28,32 |
| Y | page 3, line 4 -page 5, line 4; figures 1-3 | 2-7,13,<br>22-25,29 |
| Y | DE 883 708 C (BELA BARENYI)<br>the whole document | 2-5,<br>22-25 |
| Y | US 4 046 349 A (MACAFEE JAMES E)<br>6 September 1977 (1977-09-06)<br>abstract; figures 1-6 | 6,7,13,<br>29 |

-/--

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

[X] Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

| Date of the actual completion of the international search | Date of mailing of the international search report |
|---|---|
| 27 October 2000 | 07/11/2000 |

| Name and mailing address of the ISA | Authorized officer |
|---|---|
| European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2<br>NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk<br>Tel. (+31–70) 340–2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,<br>Fax: (+31–70) 340–3016 | Gatti, C |

1

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1992)

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/US 00/18821

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category ° | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| A | FR 2 575 708 A (RENAULT)<br>11 July 1986 (1986-07-11)<br><br>abstract; figures 1,2 | 1,8-13,<br>18,20,<br>21,<br>26-29,32 |
| A | US 2 647 791 A (BELA BARENYI)<br>4 August 1953 (1953-08-04)<br>the whole document | 2-4,8,<br>22,24 |
| A | FR 2 536 349 A (RENAULT)<br>25 May 1984 (1984-05-25) | |
| A | DE 196 34 729 A (MOHR ERNST)<br>24 April 1997 (1997-04-24) | |

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 1992)

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No
PCT/US 00/18821

| Patent document cited in search report | | Publication date | Patent family member(s) | | Publication date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FR 2572340 | A | 02-05-1986 | NONE | | |
| DE 883708 | C | | NONE | | |
| US 4046349 | A | 06-09-1977 | NONE | | |
| FR 2575708 | A | 11-07-1986 | ES | 550722 D | 01-05-1987 |
| | | | ES | 8705310 A | 16-07-1987 |
| US 2647791 | A | 04-08-1953 | DE | 819783 C | |
| | | | FR | 1026800 A | 11-05-1953 |
| | | | GB | 682906 A | |
| FR 2536349 | A | 25-05-1984 | NONE | | |
| DE 19634729 | A | 24-04-1997 | DE | 29518853 U | 13-02-1997 |

# SPACE EFFICIENT AND ADAPTABLE VEHICLE INTERIOR

## TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention generally relates to a vehicle interior and, more particularly, to a plurality of seat assemblies which, when used individually or in combination, provide a highly adaptable vehicle interior.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

With an ever increasing pressure from automotive consumers, flexibility and adaptability of vehicle interiors is increasingly required in order to provide a vehicle adapted to meet the broad consumer demand. Further, with increased social awareness of a vehicle's impact on the environment, there is an increasing demand to minimize the overall mass of the vehicle while still meeting the feature requirements of the consumer. One of these demands of the consumer is the ability of the vehicle to carry four passengers during some situations and to maximize cargo room during other situations. Some attempts to meet this demand have included the use of folding rear seat assemblies. These attempts, however, can only provide limited cargo room.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, this invention provides for a front seat assembly and a rear seat assembly, which overcome the problems and disadvantages of the conventional techniques in the art. The invention also provides for a front seat assembly and a rear seat assembly that allows the rear seat assembly to articulate forward and downward and to be stored below and behind the front seat assembly. The invention also provides for a front seat assembly that increases leg and foot room for the occupants of the rear seat assembly.

In one aspect, the invention includes a front seat assembly for a vehicle having a rear seat assembly with a rear seat bottom, including a front seat bottom having a front portion and a rear portion and a support member connected to the front seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle. The support member supports the rear portion of the front seat bottom from the vehicle such that the rear seat bottom may be moved from a use position to a stored position with a forward portion of the rear seat bottom located under the front seat bottom.

In another aspect, the invention includes a rear seat assembly for a vehicle having a front seat assembly with a front seat bottom and a front seat back, including a rear seat bottom having a forward portion and a rearward portion and being connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position and a stored position. When the rear seat bottom is moved from the use position to the stored position, the forward portion of the rear seat bottom is located under the front seat bottom.

In a further aspect, the invention includes a front seat assembly and a rear seat assembly for a vehicle, including a front seat bottom having a front portion and a rear portion, a rear seat bottom having a forward portion and a rearward portion and being connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position and a stored position, and a support member connected to the front seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle. The support member supports the rear portion of the front seat bottom from the vehicle such that the rear seat bottom may be moved from the use position to the stored position with the forward portion of the rear seat bottom located under the front seat bottom.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The various advantages of the present invention will become apparent to one skilled in the art upon reading the following specification and by reference to the drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of the rear seat assembly, according to the preferred embodiment of the invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the biasing device, articulation mechanism, and the slide mechanism, according to the preferred embodiment of the invention;

Figures 3A-3D are side views of the front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly, according to the preferred embodiment of the invention;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the biasing device and the articulation mechanism, according to an alternative embodiment of the invention;

Figure 5 is a perspective view of the slide mechanism, according to an alternative embodiment of the invention;

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the front seat assembly, according to the preferred embodiment of the invention;

relative to the supporting platform 96 by conventional systems known in the art. In the preferred embodiment, the front seat back 98 to front seat bottom 52 angle can be adjusted by a recline mechanism and preferably the front passenger side seat assembly 100 (shown in Figure 6) can be folded to a forward, generally horizontal position, thereby providing improved storage of long items within the interior of the vehicle 40 or for providing a work surface incorporating a fixed or removable seat back utility module.

If attaching cross-car beam to the B-pillar structure of the vehicle is not desired, the cross-car beam can be supported by attachments extending to the floor of the vehicle, the attachments being laterally displaced beyond the width of the rear seat bottom so as not to interfere with the storage of the rear seat assembly.

Further, in conjunction with the front passenger side seat assembly folding to a generally horizontal position, the rear seat assembly can incorporate a release mechanism which allows the rear seat back to fold to a generally horizontal position. If, as in the preferred embodiment, the forty percent portion of the rear seat back is folded to a horizontal position and the front passenger side seat assembly is folded to a horizontal position, items can be stored within the interior of the vehicle which extend from the rearward surface of the instrument panel to the rear most surface in the cargo storage compartment.

As shown in Figure 9, the front seat assembly 54 of an alternative embodiment preferably includes a center console 102 located between the front driver side seat assembly 104 and the front passenger side seat assembly 100. Like the front seat assembly 54, the center console 102 is connected to the cross-car beam 84 at a height above the floor 38 of the vehicle 40 sufficient to allow the rear seat bottom 14 to slide below the center console 102. The center console 102 may include cargo compartments, cupholders, cargo trays, or any other suitable device.

It is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the exact construction illustrated and described above, but that various changes may be made if not thereby departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

We Claim:

1. A front seat assembly for a vehicle having a rear seat assembly with a rear seat bottom, said front seat assembly comprising:

a front seat bottom having a front portion and a rear portion; and

a support member connected to said front seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, said support member supporting said rear portion of said front seat bottom from the vehicle such that the rear seat bottom may be moved from a use position to a stored position with a forward portion of the rear seat bottom located under said front seat bottom.

2. The front seat assembly of Claim 1 wherein said support member is connectable to a first side panel of the vehicle, and said support member extends from said side panel to said front seat bottom.

3. The front seat assembly of Claim 2 further comprising a second front seat bottom, and wherein said support member is connected to said second front seat bottom.

4. The front seat assembly of Claim 3 wherein said support member is connectable to a second side panel of the vehicle, and said support member extends from the first side panel to the second side panel.

5. The front seat assembly of Claim 2 further comprising a center console, and wherein said support member is connected to said center console.

6. The front seat assembly of Claim 1 further comprising a front riser connected to said front portion of said front seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, and wherein said support member is connected to said rear portion of said front seat bottom.

7. The front seat assembly of Claim 6 wherein said front seat bottom includes an adjustment mechanism connected to said mounting leg and to said support member, wherein said adjustment mechanism allows horizontal movement of said front seat bottom.

8. The front seat assembly of Claim 1 further comprising a front seat back connected to said front seat bottom.

9. A rear seat assembly for a vehicle having a front seat assembly with a front seat bottom and a front seat back, said rear seat assembly comprising:

a rear seat bottom having a forward portion and a rearward portion and being connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position and a stored position such that, when said rear seat bottom is moved from the use position to the stored position, said forward portion of said rear seat bottom is located under the front seat bottom.

10. The rear seat assembly of Claim 9 wherein said rear seat bottom is connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position, an intermediate position, and a stored position.

11. The rear seat assembly of Claim 10 further comprising an articulation mechanism connected to said rear seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, wherein said articulation mechanism allows vertical movement of said rear seat bottom between the use position and the intermediate position.

12. The rear seat assembly of Claim 11 wherein said articulation mechanism also allows horizontal movement of said rear seat bottom between the use position and the intermediate position.

13. The rear seat assembly of Claim 12 wherein said articulation mechanism includes a forward lift arm and a rearward lift arm that cooperate with said rear seat bottom and with the vehicle as a four-bar mechanism to allow the vertical movement and the horizontal movement of said rear seat bottom.

14. The rear seat assembly of Claim 13 wherein said articulation mechanism includes a biasing device connected to said forward lift arm and to said rearward lift arm, wherein said biasing device biases said rear seat bottom out of the use position.

15. The rear seat assembly of Claim 14 wherein said biasing device also biases said rear seat bottom out of the intermediate position.

16. The rear seat assembly of Claim 15 further comprising a first latching device connected to said rear seat bottom and selectively engageable with the vehicle to hold said rear seat bottom in the use position.

17. The rear seat assembly of Claim 16 further comprising a second latching device connected to said rear seat bottom and selectively engageable with said forward lift arm to hold said rear seat bottom among the intermediate position and the stored position; and a release handle connected to said first latching device and to said second latching device to simultaneously actuate said first latching device and said second latching device.

18. The rear seat assembly of Claim 10 further comprising a slide mechanism connected to said rear seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, wherein said slide mechanism allows fore-and-aft movement of said rear seat bottom between the intermediate position and the stored position.

19. The rear seat assembly of Claim 18 further comprising a third latching device connected to said slide mechanism having a first hook extending in a forward direction and a second hook extending in a rearward direction, wherein said first hook is selectively engageable with the vehicle to hold said rear seat bottom in the stored position, and said second hook is selectively engageable with the vehicle to hold said rear seat bottom among the intermediate position and the use position.

20. The rear seat assembly of Claim 9 further comprising a rear seat back connected to said rear seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position and a stored position such that, when said rear seat back is moved from the use position to the stored position, said rear seat back abuts the front seat back of the front seat assembly.

21. A front seat assembly and a rear seat assembly for a vehicle, comprising:

a front seat bottom having a front portion and a rear portion;

a rear seat bottom having a forward portion and a rearward portion and being connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position and a stored position such that, when said rear seat bottom is moved from the use position to the stored position, said forward portion of said rear seat bottom is located under said front seat bottom; and

a support member connected to said front seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, said support member supporting said rear portion of said front seat bottom from the vehicle such that said rear seat bottom may be moved from the use position to the stored position with said forward portion of said rear seat bottom located under said front seat bottom.

22. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 21 wherein said support member is connectable to a first side panel of the vehicle, and said support member extends from said side panel to said front seat bottom.

23. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 22 further comprising a second front seat bottom, and wherein said support member is connected to said second front seat bottom.

24. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 23 wherein said support member is connectable to a second side panel of the vehicle, and said support member extends from the first side panel to the second side panel.

25. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 22 further comprising a center console, and wherein said support member is connected to said center console.

26. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 21 wherein said rear seat bottom is connectable to the vehicle for movement between a use position, an intermediate position, and a stored position.

27. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 26 further comprising an articulation mechanism connected to said rear seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, wherein said articulation mechanism allows vertical movement of said rear seat bottom between the use position and the intermediate position.

28. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 27 wherein said articulation mechanism also allows horizontal movement of said rear seat bottom between the use position and the intermediate position.

29. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 28 wherein said articulation mechanism includes a forward lift arm and a rearward lift arm that cooperate with said rear seat bottom and with the vehicle as a four-bar mechanism to allow the vertical movement and the horizontal movement of said rear seat bottom.

30. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 29 wherein said articulation mechanism includes a biasing device connected to said forward lift arm and to said rearward lift arm, wherein said biasing device biases said rear seat bottom out of the use position.

31. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 30 wherein said biasing device also biases said rear seat bottom out of the intermediate position.

32. The front seat assembly and the rear seat assembly of Claim 26 further comprising a slide mechanism connected to said rear seat bottom and connectable to the vehicle, wherein said slide mechanism allows fore-and-aft movement of said rear seat bottom between the intermediate position and the stored position.